

from nearly all of the islands of the West Indies, numbering altogether many thousands of specimens. He, himself, made five trips to different parts of the West Indies, and besides, sent out various collectors to the different islands, some of whom were in the field for from six to eighteen months each. Mr. Cory's book forms an invaluable hand-book of West Indian ornithology, and will prove indispensable to all future workers in this field, his citation of the extensive literature being especially important.—J. A. A.

Sclater's Catalogue of the Mesomyodian Passeres.*—Few books can be more welcome to the general student of birds than monographic works treating of the non-osciniine Passeres of America, the literature relating to them being widely scattered and difficult of access, the synonymy perplexing, and the species of the larger genera exceptionally difficult to distinguish. When the task of bringing order out of this almost hopeless chaos is undertaken by a master in the field, as in the present case, whose familiarity with the birds to be treated is admittedly greater than that of any of his fellow-workers in the same field, the ordinary student can but feel that a great burden has been lifted, and a vast flood of light spread over a dark corner of the ornithological field. While the work before us is an inestimable boon, and will make the way far easier for all who may come after, it still leaves much to be desired, and is in some ways disappointing and unsatisfactory. But, from the nature of the case, this was perhaps unavoidable, and the attitude of the reviewer should be one of gratitude for blessings received rather than of criticism and complaint that an ideal treatment of the subject has not been presented.

"In dealing," says Dr. Slater, "with the five Neogean families—Tyrannidæ, Oxyrhamphidæ, Pipridæ, Cotingidæ, and Phytotomidæ—I have followed throughout, with few exceptions, the divisions and arrangement adopted by Mr. Salvin and myself in our 'Nomenclator Avium Neotropicalium,' published in 1873. It would have been better, no doubt, in some respects, to have attempted a thorough revision of these groups; but I felt that the short time assigned to me for the preparation of the present volume, and the comparatively little leisure I had to devote to it, would not give me a chance of performing this revision satisfactorily. This, therefore, I must leave to some younger and better qualified worker to perform. Nevertheless, . . . I feel that I have accomplished a not unsatisfactory piece of work, and one that will enable the ornithologist of the future, who may wish to take in hand a real monograph of these difficult groups, to start with much greater advantage." To concede this claim,

*Catalogue | of the | Passeriformes, | or Perching Birds, | in the | Collection | of the British Museum. | — | Oligomyodæ, | or the Families | Tyrannidæ, Oxyrhamphidæ, Pipridæ, Cotingidæ, | Phytotomidæ, Philepittidæ, Pittidæ, | Xenicidæ, and Eurylæmidæ. | By | Philip Lutley Slater. | London: | Printed by order of the Trustees, | 1888.—8vo, pp. xx + 495, pll. xxvi. Forming Vol. XIV of 'Catalogue of the Birds in the British Museum.'

which we most heartily do, is to make but faint recognition of the heavy obligations ornithologists must feel they are under to the author of the volume under notice.

Of the thirteen families of so-called Mesomyodian Passeres only nine, forming the section Oligomyodæ, are treated in the present volume; the remaining four (Tracheophonæ), all New World forms, will form the subject of a succeeding volume, by the same author, already nearly ready for publication. Of the families treated 655 species are recognized, represented in the British Museum Collection by 7360 specimens, only 38 of the species recognized as valid being unrepresented in the collection, which includes 161 "actual 'types' of species" treated, and much other authentic material. The Tyrannidæ number 409 species; the Oxyrhamphidæ, 5; the Pipridæ, 79; the Cotingidæ, 110; the Phytotomidæ, 4; the Philepittidæ, 2; the Pittidæ, 50; the Xenicidæ, 3; the Eurylæmidæ, 11.

The Tyrannidæ thus outnumber, nearly two to one, the species of all the other eight families collectively. As is well known to our readers, they are exclusively American, and mainly limited to the American tropics, although a few genera are widely dispersed over North America. "Their generally uniform plumage and similar external structure renders the discrimination of the species of the Tyrannidæ and their grouping into genera extremely difficult, and in many cases unsatisfactory." Add to this the considerable range of individual and seasonal variation occurring in many of the genera, and the difficulties in the way of the systematist are in some cases well nigh disheartening. While many species "no doubt remain to be discovered, as the more remote portions of South America come to be investigated," it is equally certain that as more material is accumulated many hitherto currently recognized species will have to be reduced to synonyms. As might be expected in large genera of closely allied species, brief descriptions, such as are given in the present work, fail to discriminate, and the characters given in the 'keys' fail to throw much further light. This, in many cases, is the fault of the 'species,' but not infrequently the fault of haste in the preparation of the work. Commonly, however, a line or two is added to the description stating the supposed differences separating one closely allied species from another. In many instances the author is laudably conservative in respect to admitting species that have slight claims to admission, while in other similar cases judgment is apparently waived in favor of current tradition. In other cases species have been merged which are unquestionably distinct.

Perhaps the most unsatisfactory feature of the work is the omission to give more than a brief description of an average adult bird, in cases where there is much seasonal variation in plumage, and often very great variation between adult and young. A case in point is *Copurus colonus*, under which *C. funebris* Cab. & Hein. is placed as a synonym, without a word of comment, or any indication that the young bird is in any way different from the adult. The adult *C. colonus* is a black bird, with a white rump and a grayish white head, and the middle pair of tail-feathers

three times the length of the lateral ones. The young (on which *C. funebris* is supposed to have been founded) is wholly deep black, with the middle tail-feathers but slightly exceeding the others in length. Such descriptions of course cover only half the ground, and are exceedingly inefficient.

Lack of space forbids criticism of the many points in respect to synonymy and nomenclature which almost daily use of the work for several months has brought to light, many of which we hope to cover later in other connections. They do not, however, seriously detract from the value of the work, which in its orderly grouping of the species, the marshaling of thousands upon thousands of references to the literature of the subject, and the fair clues given for the recognition of the species will ever render the work invaluable to all future workers in the same field.—
J. A. A.

Sclater and Hudson's 'Argentine Ornithology.'—The second volume* of this excellent treatise has just appeared, completing the work. Its general character having been already stated in our notice of the first volume (*Auk*, V, p. 199), it only remains to speak of the special features of the present one, which contains an account of all the non-Passerine birds found in the Argentine Republic. The high praise we gave the first volume is fully merited by the second. In this the biographies are in many instances more extended, especially in the case of several of the Hawks and Owls. The whole number of species recognized as belonging to the Argentine avifauna is 434, of which 205 are treated in the present volume. An important feature of the work is an annotated bibliographical appendix, giving a list of the works and papers referred to in the body of the work, to which is added a list of the principal localities where collections have been made. An 'Introduction' of eight pages treats of the avifauna analytically, in reference to the numerical representation of the various families and orders, as compared with the Neotropical region at large.

As stated in our notice of the former volume, we regret that it was deemed necessary to restrict the technical portions of the work to brief diagnoses of the adult bird, with rarely any reference to immature phases or other variations of plumage, since a fuller treatment of this part of the subject would have made the work far more useful as a handbook of Argentine ornithology. At page 11 of Volume II we notice a singular lapsus pennæ, the English name of *Chordeiles virginianus* (Gm.) being given as "Whip-poor-will" in the heading, while in the biographical text the species is referred to as "the well-known Whip-poor-will of the United States!"

* Argentine Ornithology. | A | Descriptive Catalogue | of the | Birds of the Argentine Republic. | By | P. L. Slater, M. A., Ph. D., F. R. S., Etc. | With Notes on their Habits | By | W. H. Hudson, C. M. Z. S., late of Buenos Ayres. | [Vignette] Burmeister's Cariama. | — | Volume II. | — | London: | R. H. Porter, 18 Princes Street, Cavendish Square, W. | 1889.—8vo, pp. i-xxiv+1-251, pll. col. xi-xx.